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AUTHOR McGillick, Paul
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ABSTRACT

A reflective approach to inservice teacher education for English language teachers is discussed. In it, teachers look closely at what they are doing during instruction, how and why, and the context. The approach is contrasted with traditional experiential teacher training, which regards teaching as transfer of information and learning as receiving, storing, and digesting information. The reflective approach begins with teacher awareness of existing attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In addition, the truly professional teacher combines competence with a degree of intuitiveness; good teaching cannot be taught but can be coached. An effective reflective professional development program encourages teachers to reflect on what they are doing and make productive connections with both their own knowledge and skills and those of their colleagues. A format used in a University of Sydney (Australia) inservice course includes team teaching with a coach, discussion and theoretical input, further input in a workshop context, more teaching, and followup dialogue between coach and trainee. Trainees keep a learner log recording reflection, then present a report at the course's end. Participants are encouraged to view the task as an experiment with themselves as subjects, to derive a profile of themselves as learners. Sample reflective exercises are appended. (Contains nine references.) (MSE)

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# NON-DIDACTIVE REFLECTIVE APPROACHES IN ELT TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Paul McGillick
University of Sydney

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Teacher Education in Second Language Teaching

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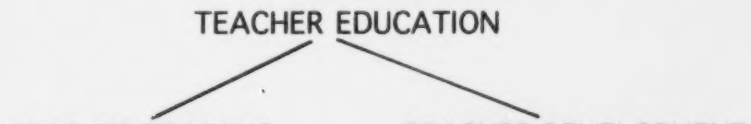
## Teacher Development and Reflection

This paper is concerned with English language teacher development - which is to say, it is concerned with the in-service training of experienced teachers. This involves the re-assessment of their practice, the matching up of their existing knowledge with recent developments in the field and a sharing of concerns with colleagues.

Teacher development is a sub-category of teacher education, the other sub-category being teacher training which is concerned with the initial training of English language teachers.




(Freeman, 1989)

Literally, teacher development requires teachers to **look again** at what they are teaching, how and why they are doing it and at the context in which they are doing it. The term commonly applied to such a process is **reflection.** In fact, both teacher training and teacher development can be reflective or involve reflective activities and typically teacher education courses are reflective in two senses. Firstly, they require the participants to reflect back on personal or professional experiences which might be relevant to their future practice and, secondly, to reflect on the course activities themselves - that is, on their current experience.

Frequently, teacher education programmes will be structured in such a way that the learning which takes place is experiential. In other words, the participating teachers will be asked to do something first, then asked to talk about it, before being asked to do it again.

Hence, the teachers are being asked to reflect both on what they have done in the past and on what they are doing at the moment as part of their training. Moreover, as Tessa Woodward (1990) has pointed out, it is important that what the teachers experience in their training or development programmes should mirror or reflect what their own students might be expected to experience. In this way, TT and TD become metaphors for language learning itself. This helps to ensure that teachers stay in touch with the experience of their own learners and that what they ask of their learners has a certain common sense reality to it rather than the more risky application of abstract principles of teaching and learning to the classroom.

It is important that such reflection grow out of genuinely interactive activities.

Given that teacher development is concerned with re-evaluating three things - attitudes, knowledge and skills - it needs to be remembered that such re-evaluation can only take place after some form of consciousness-raising. This is because attitudes are frequently subliminal, skills often instinctive rather than conscious and knowledge, too, often internalised and hard to articulate.

In other words, teachers first need to be made aware of their existing attitudes, knowledge and skills before they can usefully re-assess them. Attitudes, knowledge and skills need to be brought to the level of consciousness before they can be manipulated and modified and this, we know, is done through action rather than talking about it.

Hence teacher development courses need to employ what Donald Schön (1983, 1987) has termed **reflection-in-action**, which in turn is based on **knowing-in-action**.

Schön (1987) describes knowing-in-action as the sort of know-how "we reveal in our intelligent action...We reveal it by our spontaneous, skillful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit." (25) Likewise, "reflection-in-action is a process we can deliver without being able to say what we are doing." (31). It is a process of understanding and assessing what we are doing while we are doing it.

Let me now look briefly at the notion of professionalism because it is the know-how and reflective adroitness of the professional which we are seeking either to extend or to instil in the teachers who attend in-service courses.

## Professional Practice and Artistry

Most of us probably believe that the outstanding teacher has a set of resources which somehow defy detailed description. Moreover, we suspect that the talents of the outstanding teacher cannot be fully or even partly attributed to his or her professional training. When all the teacher training has been done, the lesson plans drawn up and the materials and activities planned, there remains a kind of artistry or intuitive gift which separates the outstanding teacher from the merely competent.

Summing up recent publications on in-service training for English language teachers, Keith Morrow and Marita Schocker (1993,) comment:

"The common strand running through these sources is the recognition that language teaching is a highly complex and extremely demanding activity which in most contexts requires far more of practitioners than the simple transmission of facts and knowledge to passive and receptive students. In the classroom, teachers are under a constant pressure to shape and respond to events - in a word, to act." (47)

This echoes the concerns of Schön who points out that there are three things distinguishing professional practice of any kind - uncertainty, uniqueness and conflict. In other words, the challenges of a profession are by no means predictable and often bring with them various forms of conflict.

But professonal training has tended to follow an applied science model or what Schön (1987) calls **technical rationality** which "treats professional competence as the application of privileged knowledge to instrumental problems of practice." (xi) In other words, professional training courses claim to be able to identify in advance the problems to be solved and then offer ready-made solutions to those problems through a process of instruction which involves supposed experts (in our case, teacher-trainers) transmitting privileged information to either trainee teachers or experienced teachers in in-service.

According to Schön, the traditional approach to training professionals regards "teaching as a transfer of information (and) learning as receiving, storing and digesting information. 'Knowing that' tends to take priority over 'knowing how'; and know-how, when it does make its appearance, takes the form of science-based technique." (309)

If we follow Tessa Woodward's (1991) idea of ELT teacher training as a metaphor for ELT itself, this kind of teacher training/development is of the PPP kind - presentation, practice and more practice (production) - which, as Rod Ellis (1993) recently reminded us, "we can do...until we're blue in the face, but it doesn't necessarily result in what the PPP was designed to do." (5)

By contrast, the outstanding professional is characterised by competence (that is, internalised knowledge-in-action) and artistry. Hence, professional training needs a different "epistemology of practice" (Schön), one which takes into account artistry and one based on knowing- and reflection-in-action.

Schön's reflective practicum has three main features:

LEARNING BY DOING ——————— "FOLLOW ME!"

COACHING RATHER THAN TEACHING —— "JOINT EXPERIMENTATION"

A DIALOGUE OF RECIPROCAL ———— "HALL OF MIRRORS"
REFLECTION IN ACTION BETWEEN
COACH AND STUDENT

Schön points out that the trainee professional cannot be **taught** what he needs to know, but he can be **coached**. Once again we see here a parallel - or metaphor, to use my earlier term - with language learning itself where the language teacher is now seen more as a coach than a teacher, thus reflecting the current emphasis on how people learn languages rather than on how they are taught. Similarly, just as the current emphasis in ELT encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning, so a reflective approach to professional training encourages the trainees to take responsibility for their own professional development.

Summing up his proposed practicum, Schön (1987) quotes John Dewey:

"He has to see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see just by being 'told', although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see." (17)

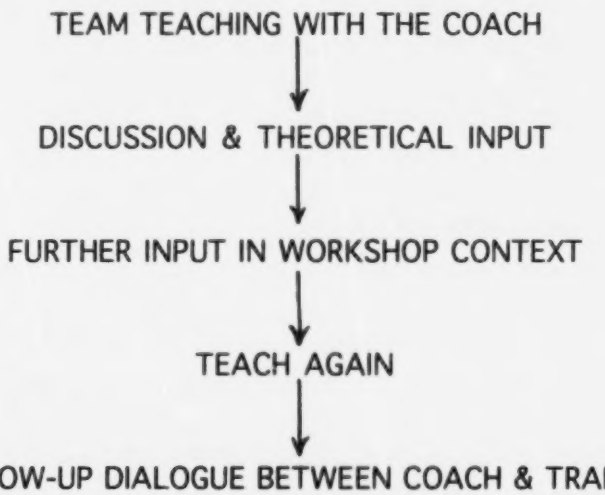
So, we are looking for a teacher development programme which helps participating teachers to become aware of their underlying attitudes towards themselves as teachers, towards their profession and its tasks, and towards the learners. At the same time, such a programme should help them become aware of their current practice and knowledge.

The ELT teacher development programme, then, needs to encourage participating teahcers to reflect on what they are doing in the programme itself and make productive connections with their own existing knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as with those of their colleagues.

Finally, an ELT teacher development programme needs to develop the knowing-in-action and artistry of the participating teachers as an important complement to the more traditional applied science approach to professional training.

Let me now suggest some ways of doing this using Schön's "reflective practicum", beginning with some approaches we have adopted in the TESOL Programme at the University of Sydney.

1) Follow a format which a) adheres to the principle of "do it - talk about it - do it again", and b) mixes the best of the reflective practicum with the best of the appplied science model. Ideally, this would involve:


TEAM TEACHING WITH THE COACH
DISCUSSION & THEORETICAL INPUT
FURTHER INPUT IN WORKSHOP CONTEXT
TEACH AGAIN
FOLLOW-UP DIALOGUE BETWEEN COACH & TRAINEE

2) Practice teaching is the ideal starting point. However, it is not always feasible to set up practice teaching, usually because the local ELT context does not replicate the trainee's home context. The alternative here is to have the trainees observe ELT classes and then have follow-up sessions with the teachers who have been observed.

In addition, peer teaching - perhaps using video recording - can be used (although the participants need to be properly prepared for this and the diagnostic sessions handled sensitively to avoid the potential problems of teachers performing in front of one another and evaluating each other's performance).

3) The Language Learning Project at the University of Sydney was adapted from the Masters in TEFL Programme at Reading University in the U.K. To the extent that it requires keeping a personal record, it is an example of the learner log or diary idea which, in teacher education, is used to encourage reflective evaluation of teachers' experiences on professional development courses and to raise awareness.

In the case of the LLP, the teachers are asked to study a language they have not been exposed to before. They are required to put regular time aside to do so and are asked to try a variety of approaches - self-teaching at home, language laboratory, one-to-one or group teaching with native speakers of the target language, even special classes.

They are asked to keep a diary and, at the end of the course, present a report on their language learning. The teachers are encouraged to view the task as an experiment with themselves as the subject, the aim of which is to come up with a profile of themselves as language learners - which language learning contexts work best for them, which personality variables they think most influence their success or otherwise and so on. In addition, they are asked to consider some broader issues which are likely to arise, such as the nature of difficulty, language complexity etc.

These have been some possible course components in an ELT teacher development programme emphasising experiential and reflective approaches.

In conclusion, here are some suggestions for dealing with specific issues in ELT teacher development using what might be termed non-didactic approaches because they favour reflection and the use of imagery, metaphor and intuition over analysis and discursive instruction. Needless to say, I am not proposing that these "humanistic" activities are sufficient for a comprehensive teacher development programme. But I do think they might complement other, more didactic or discursive approaches.

A)

THEME: Raising awareness of attitudes towards L2 learning.

TECHNIQUES: Brainstorming, mapping, imagery.

1) Work in small groups. Do the following exercise as fast as possible.

Learning a new language us like (make a list)

2) Now draw up two columns and divide your list of similes for L2 learning into positives and negatives.

3) Take the negatives first. If someone said these things to you, think up an image for each negative which would cancel out the negative message in favour of a positive.

Ex: Learning a new language is like falling off a cliff.

**but**

Think how exciting it is flying through the air

**or**

...with a great big, feather-filled mattress at the bottom.

4) Now take the positives. Draft out some advertising brochures using these images to sell the learning of an L2 as though it were a product for sale.

B)

THEME: Raising awareness of communication as negotiation and the importance of repairs.

TECHNIQUE: Reflection.

1) Think back to five occasions when you experienced a communication breakdown (either in your L1 or in an L2). What happened?

2) There was probably at least one point in the communication where the breakdown could have been averted. List as many such points as you can think of.

3) Now suggest a way in which each of the breakdowns could have been averted.

C)

THEME: Large classes and interaction.

TECHNIQUES: Sentence completion, imagery, brainstorming.

1) Work in groups of four, each divided into two.

Individual work - complete the following sentences, filling the "My Response" lines.

a) Teaching a class of 50 or 60, all sitting in rows, feels like_____
_____ (My response)

_____ (Your response)

b) If the teacher of this class were a machine,s/he would be a _____
_____ (My response)

_____ (Your response)

c) If this teacher were an animal, s/he would be _____
_____ (My response)

_____ (Your response)

Pair work - exchange your responses and fill in the "Your response" lines. In pairs describe and/or describe a composite "teacher-as-machine" or "teacher-as-animal".

Group work - each pair to draw a picture of the other pair's machine and animal based on answers to questions put to the pair.

2) Work in pairs. You are i the same classroom with 50-60 students. Think of as many ways as you can whereby these students could talk to one another across the classroom. Let your imagination run free and include even the craziest ideas, regardless of how practical or impractical they may seem.

3) Work in small groups. If you could change the following in this classroom what would you do?

a) The teacher's behaviour (including teaching techniques).
b) The teaching materials.
c) The room lay-out.

D)

THEME: Why teach pronunciation?

TECHNIQUE: Reflection.

1) You are in a lecture which interests you a lot. But the speaker mumbles, stares at the ceiling or at his notes, does not signpost important points and so on. In short, you find it hard to follow. What is your **emotional** response?

2) You are speaking to an L2 speaker. S/he has a particularly heavy accent - so heavy, in fact, that you can barely understand a word s/he is saying. What is your response? Is there a difference between your outward response and inner feelings?

3) Imagine a situation where accent (pronunciation) might affect a) comprehension, and b) attitude towards the speaker.

(Note: If you are a native-speaker, can you imagine a situation in which the accent of another native speaker might affect comprehension and/or your personal evaluation of the person?

4) Now, how do you answer the following questions?

a) How native-like should a learner's accent be?

b) Are we aiming for intelligibility - if so, in which variety?

(Note: take into account the variety oflearners' needs and the context in which they will eventually use the target language)

E)

THEME: Affective factors in L2 learning.

TECHNIQUES: Imagery, reflection.

Deal with the following questions as individuals first, then in small groups of three.

1) Think back to when you were beginning to learn and use a foreign language. List some of the feelings you experienced at the time.

2) Now, probably some of those feelings were negative - for example, perhaps you felt you were not very good at learning languages. If you were to replace those negative feelings, or attitudes, what might the positive ones be?

3) Write up two columns with the headings: Positive and Negative.

4) Imagine what a successful foreign language learner a) sounds like, and b) looks like as s/he is speaking the language.

Describe those images in a few words. Alternatively, draw a picture.

F)

THEME: Drawing teachers' attention to individual differences in learning styles.

TECHNIQUES: Imagery, brainstorming.

1) You are hosting a party. There will be a lot of people coming and many will not know one another. You are watching for new arrivals. List five different ways you can imagine your guests responding as they arrive and think of an animal which best represents the way they respond.

EX: Guest A's eyes light up at the sight of so many interesting people. He joins the party like a big, friendly dog.

2) Once you have your list, note down what you, as the host, would do for each of those five guests.

EX: Just let that big, friendly dog go bounding in to the party by himself without introductions.

G)

THEME: Sensitising teachers to the role of attitude in L2 learning.

TECHNIQUE: Imagery.

1) If a new language were an animal, it would be a _____
and it would look like this: (Draw a picture)

2) The nice about living with an animal like this would be_____
_____

3) ...While the bad thing would be_____

4) But I would domesticate my animal by _____

5) Now my animal can do all sorts of things for me, such as...
(List as many as you can think of)

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